

# BALLET TODAY

VOL 2. No. 19

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1949



A MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO BALLET EVERYWHERE

2/-



*Just Ready !*

PETER REVITT'S

# BALLET GUYED

*With an introduction by Mary Clarke*

We are not going to pamper you by reproducing another of these brilliant caricatures. Instead we tantalise you by giving below the complete list of artists thus immortalised. Your favourite and your unfavourite dancer will certainly be here.

Alicia Alonso, Frederick Ashton, Jean Babilée, Margaret Dale, Alexandra Danilova, Anton Dolin, André Eglevsky, Violetta Elvin, Margot Fonteyn, Frederic Franklin, Sally Gilmour, Ram Gopal, Alexander Grant, Beryl Grey, John Hart, Robert Helpmann, Rosella Hightower, Mona Inglesby, Renée Jeanmaire, Nora Kaye, John Kriza, Hugh Laing, Alicia Markova, Leonide Massine, Pamela May, Roland Petit, Nathalie Philippart, Alexis Rassine, Tatiana Riabouchinska, Moira Shearer, Irène Skorik, Michael Somes, Tamara Toumanova, Harold Turner, Hans Zullig, and a surprise item.

Size 10 ins. by 7½ ins.

PRICE **5/-**

(by Post 5/3)

Published by

BALLET TODAY

4TH FLOOR, 244, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.1

# Ballet Today

Vol. 2. No. 19

September-October 1949

Offices - 244 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.1

Telephone : Chancery 8471

EDITORIAL - Telephone: Flaxman 9552

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE November/December number of *Ballet Today* will have a special section devoted to the New York season of Sadler's Wells Ballet. In addition to exclusive photographs of the company on stage, backstage and off stage (for the social side of this visit is also of considerable importance), there will be articles by Mary Clarke and Murray N. Friedman presenting the season from the English and the American critical angle, and a special newsletter from Franklin White who will write about it from the dancer's point of view.

It seems a pity that, with all the enormous preparations made beforehand in the way of general furbishing up and re-casting of the repertoire, a vast amount of extra rehearsing and, of course, where the girls were concerned, all that fitting of delicious English clothes to dazzle the eyes of American buyers (was there no one to hand out even a pair of socks to some deserving male dancer?), it never seems to have entered the heads of the directors that it might also have been a good idea to see that the dancers were not thoroughly tired out before they started on their onerous visit. A month in three outlying suburban cinemas with difficult stages and inconvenient journeys immediately after the strenuous month at Covent Garden does not seem a very satisfactory preliminary to what has been so much stressed as the biggest event in the history of our Ballet. No doubt the money made during those overwhelmingly successful four weeks is a great consideration (there was even a time when an extra week was projected which, happily, did not materialise), but if this short tour could have been arranged to take place before instead of after the company appeared at Covent Garden it would have been much better for the dancers. As readers of *Ballet Today* know, I strongly uphold the view that it is the duty of Sadler's Wells Ballet to tour in this country far more extensively than has been the case since the Royal Opera House became their permanent home, and I am not recanting this opinion, but on this occasion the time was inauspi-

cious. Next year, we have been told, Sadler's Wells will undertake a long tour of the provinces—news which will have been received with delight by ballet lovers all over the country who have not been able to have a glimpse of them since 1946.

News that the Ballets de Paris de Roland Petit was to have a season in New York concurrently with the visit of Sadler's Wells makes one hold one's breath at such temerity and wonder at the planning that made such a thing possible. It was probably expected that *Carmen* would draw the crowds in spite of the opposition at the Metropolitan, for this ballet, together with *Pas d'Action*, *L'Oeuf a la Coque*, *Le Rendez-vous* and *Le Combat* made up the entire repertoire. This company was due to open at the Winter Garden on October 6th, thereby beating Sadler's Wells by three days. A friend who saw the company in Paris recently tells me that John Gilpin made a sensational success in a *pas de deux* choreographed by Volinine called *Arlequinade*, in which Jeanmaire and our own Belinda Wright alternated in the feminine role. Gilpin has now left the company and joined the Marquis de Cuevas Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo. Toumanova has returned in time for the Paris season at the Palais de Chaillot which began on October 1st. Both she and Gilpin will appear in a new ballet by John Taras.

I recently spent a fascinating afternoon at a small home pottery, and having had the forethought to provide myself with a ten-year-old nephew who asked all sorts of intelligent questions which would never have occurred to me, I succeeded in learning a great deal more about how one sets about making a pot (and innumerable other delightful objects) than I would otherwise have done. I even discovered that you do not "make" a pot, you "throw" it. I was by no means neglecting my duties towards Ballet, for Mrs. Foy has recently been turning her skill to making ballet figures of great charm and accuracy. They are all made individually, not with moulds, and a set which were shown this summer at the Birmingham Theatre Exhibition on the stand arranged by the Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson Theatre Collection were generally considered one of the highlights of the Exhibition. In their completely modern way they are a continuation of the Staffordshire tradition which preserves in pottery the romantic ballerinas and their partners copied from contemporary lithographs. An exhibition in London is a strong possibility this winter. I reproduce on Page 31 the *Swan Lake pas de deux* (Danilova and Franklin) though a photograph cannot show the charm of the colouring.

There are persistent rumours from Italy that Margot Fonteyn will appear next year for a season as guest artist at La Scala, Milan.

P.W.M.





Action photograph by Frank Sharman

MARGOT FONTEYN, PARTNERED BY MICHAEL SOMES, IN "LE LAC DES CYGNES", ACT 2

## AU REVOIR TO SADLER'S WELLS

I must have been only one of many who sat and watched the August season of Sadler's Wells Ballet at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, with part of the mind anxiously focussed on what American reactions were likely to be to every ballet and all the individual dancers. If I came to any conclusions it would be a waste of time to put them on record now, because when these words appear in print we shall already know, and I might equally well be prophesying after the event or proved hopelessly wrong. But there are some points regarding alterations and re-casting made specially with America in mind which I should like to discuss alongside my general reflections on the season.

The revival of *Faça* (August 1st) was done at the express wish of Mr. Sol Hurok the impresario who is presenting Sadler's Wells in America. This request was, I imagine, prompted by the enormous success made by Miss Edith Sitwell earlier in the year when reciting her own poems to the Walton music before a coterie New York audience. Without a knowledge of the

historical background (balletically speaking) of *Faça* I doubt whether it can now mean very much to any new audience of whatever nationality. It is essentially a small ballet and ever since it was re-dressed following the loss of the original décor in Holland it has grown steadily broader and broader until almost all semblance to the original has been lost. It is safe to say that it has never been presented with better painted scenery, better made costumes and better dancing all round than it was during this season, with the result that I was reminded of the frog in the fable who puffed himself up until he burst. To take only one example of the smudging of outline—the joke about the Polka was that Alicia Markova, a classical ballerina, took off her skirts and danced a difficult, but nonchalant solo in her knickers (and to show you what it once looked like I print a picture of her doing it). For years now the joke has been transferred from the dance to the dancer's corsets and drawers which, I submit, are not very funny after the first time. Nadia Nerina danced in this



revival with a chubby charm but through no fault of her own it was not the *Façade* Polka. I very much liked Michael Boulton and Donald Britton in *Popular Song* which survives because the costumes are practically the same and "corny routines" remain unchanged down the ages. I shall probably hear in due course that *Façade* is the rage of New York but nothing will shake me in my belief that it is not a ballet for Covent Garden.

*Apparitions* has been masked down in the same way as *The Rake's Progress* by the addition of a false proscenium. This does away with the cyclorama and the production now fills the available space instead of being lost in the middle. The sky cloth which takes the place of the cyclorama tends to pick up a multitude of shadows when Helpmann raised his arm about twenty-four pallid arms flickered behind him with an early-film effect) but a slight adjustment of the lighting can probably rectify this.

*The Sleeping Beauty* which occupied the second week was sumptuous in its crisp new dresses which, unhappily, showed up the limp and dirty appearance of the Queen's

LICIA MARKOVA IN THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION OF "FACADE" IN 1931



train. I am always worried by the fact that she appears at her daughter's wedding in the same dress she wore at her christening one hundred and sixteen years before. Surely her first action on awakening and finding that she is to be a mother-in-law would be to call for the court dressmakers. The new casting of several of the Fairies' variations did not make much difference to the whole effect, but here perhaps is the place to make a terrible confession. *The Sleeping Beauty* is a ballet which bores me every second of the time that is not connected with Aurora to whose every movement I am devoted. I am also prepared to worship the Blue Bird *pas de deux* if Providence will kindly put a good one in my way. If I could have Alonso, Chauviré, Jeanmaire, Kaye, Markova and Toumanova in those Fairy variations I should probably be prostrate with delight. As it is, I still do not feel I have ever seen them, and this is not meant as a criticism of the Sadler's Wells dancers who I am sure perform them exactly as they have been taught. It is just that the magic has been left out.

I wish the conception of the King and Queen could be reconsidered. The Queen has too little dignity and the King is so stiff with it that I am always surprised to find that he can sit down. And amidst the general overhaul there still remain two glaringly bad pieces of production in the last act. No King and Queen have ever been known to enter a ballroom *first*—they should be the peak point of the procession. Secondly, the entry for the *grand pas de deux* (and this also applies to Aurora's solo) is pitifully insignificant—two little figures at the back of a vast, empty space. Few dancers have more of the grand manner than Fonteyn and Helpmann but even they seem almost to be slinking in.

Fonteyn was as ravishing as ever as Aurora and the moment when she pricks her finger is that most poignant thing—the child's first awareness of deliberate unkindness.

Moira Shearer danced in the Blue Bird *pas de deux* at alternative performances. It was beautifully precise but her *port de bras* was a little too conscious. Rassine does not partner well and his dancing is not quite outstanding enough to make one overlook this.

Shearer also danced both Aurora and Cinderella and would appear to have reached some kind of a crisis in her career. She seems unable to develop that command of the stage and breadth of movement which the big classical roles demand, and where a year ago we were prepared to wait for these to come, there is now a definite feeling that something is lacking. Perhaps her unquenchable, exquisite prettiness is against her, for a ballerina can almost better afford to be ugly so long as the ugliness has character. On the other hand it might help her if she were cast against type in modern ballets for a time. She is invariably a delight to the eye but everything is on too small a scale.



Watching *The Rake's Progress* I felt rather as though I were looking at one of the restored Old Masters in the National Gallery. Much of the "business" which it has been accumulating for years has been swept away and it was revealed clear and shining. No one has ever commented on the fact that when it was first produced the Rake was not the hopeless buffoon during his dancing lesson that he gradually became, and I was glad to see that the clowning here has been greatly toned down and that the end of the lesson finds him much improved. I like Violetta Elvin more than any of the other Betrayed Girls except Elizabeth Miller—strange that a young Russian should so exactly catch the spirit of this essentially English work. A strange piece of re-casting is Brian Shaw as the Dancing Master. He dances it extremely well but hardly makes any attempt at characterisation. I should have been more inclined to try him as the Blue Bird and leave Rassine as the Dancing Master whom he invests with a finicky pertness which is exactly right.

The only performance of *Hamlet* I saw was a dreadfully routine affair in which the whole company except Helpmann, who always gives it everything he's got, seemed to be more than half asleep. As the gallery greeted it with cheers I imagine these must have been meant as a tribute of sympathy to the dancer-choreographer rather than for the performance as a whole.

Watching *Job* the same evening I felt distinctly nervous as to what an American audience is going to make of it since it pre-supposes a knowledge of the Blake illustrations which I cannot believe the average American possesses (and which in the case of Elihu is well-nigh essential), and some understanding of music so typically English as that of Dr. Vaughan Williams.

*Miracle in the Gorbals* went with its usual clockwork slickness. The street fight seemed more than ever as exact a piece of reconstruction of the real thing as the present semi-documentary film-cycle in which brutality is held up for execration but is very carefully reproduced in its full horror.

Everyone greeted with joy the return of Constant Lambert, not only as conductor on certain nights, but as the narrator in *A Wedding Bouquet*. He now sits down stage left (audience right) at a table spread with a white cloth and decorated with a similar green creeper to that which adorns the tables for the wedding breakfast. There is a carafe of wine before him and he is reading his French newspaper having just concluded what we hope has been an extremely good dinner. He is then kind enough to explain the scene and story danced before us, and, as anticipated, makes plain many of the jokes obscured by the chorus singing. His return also brings back the "clever saucer" explanation. To hear this, Helpmann leans with one hand on the table and listens with intense concentration. At first it seems beyond his comprehension, then understanding gleams

across his face like a sunbeam and as he warmly shakes Lambert by the hand we realise that he has at last learnt something he has always wanted to know. He was a tremendous form altogether as the Bridegroom, and Anne Heaton as the forlorn Julia (deputising for Moin Shearer who did not appear during the last week owing to illness) showed in this and as the Milkmaid in *Faça* that her métier is probably going to be in character rather than classical roles.

The more I see *Checkmate* the more I realise how much it needs Helpmann as the Red King to make its tragedy seem of any importance. If I were Helpmann I would gladly swop Florimund for the Red King, and if I were Valois I would have cast him in it without waiting to be asked. I would also be ruthless and cut out completely the Black Queen's tango after the death of the Red Knight. If she has not established her character by that time, it is far too late to do so and the delay in reaching the climax almost ruins the ballet.

For many the highlight of the season was *Le Lac des Cygnes* given with the new Hurry décor (scenery only). By some odd piece of programme arranging the single-act version was given at the beginning of the same week and with the new back cloth. I think it a great pity that this company should do the one-act version at all. As a separate ballet it needs to be approached differently and is obviously incomplete when done, as it is here, simply as an extract from the full ballet. The "first night" of August 18th was ostensibly for the décor but as most of the audience must already have seen one third of it already, the air of excitement in the theatre was obviously due to anticipation of the performance and pleasure at seeing the familiar figure of Constant Lambert making his way to the conductor's desk. His presence made all the difference in the orchestra well and must have been an enormous help to the dancers.

Hurry's first set is unmemorable—I saw it twice and would be hard put to it to describe it. The lake scene looks like an area devastated by atom bombs, the lake itself being no more than a large puddle and the carefully articulated trees which form the wings bearing no relationship whatsoever to the backcloth, as one simply refuses to believe that such foliage would be growing within a hundred miles of that particular type of landscape. His third set is beautiful and imposing in itself—a towering viaduct on slender pillars, but as a design for a palace it would hardly pass the board of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Surely some knowledge of the first principles of architecture should be an essential part of stage designing? The costumes for the ballroom which did at least "go" with the original set now seem out of place. Perhaps some day some kind of unity between scenery and costumes will be achieved.

However I do not suppose that many there gave the sets much thought after the first scrutiny on the rising of the curtain, for Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somers



## BALLET TODAY

were giving such performances as one remembers for years after and no one had eyes for anything else. Truth to tell, I have seen Fonteyn dance more brilliantly (and, although she can never give less than a lovely performance in anything, she seemed a little *piano* all through the season as though she were feeling the strain of intensive rehearsing), yet I have never been more moved by the sorrows of Odette or felt more convinced of the wickedness of Odile. Some of the alterations to the third act *pas de deux* seem arbitrary and without regard to whether they are actually more effective; for example, the two supported arabesques taken sideways and then squared definitely fail to look anything but awkward, but I wholeheartedly approve of the jettisoning of the dreary waltz for the male solo. This may be the authentic original but the music now substituted has been used in Russia for many years and has an unmistakably masculine ring. Some responded with dancing of remarkable *brio* and partnered magnificently throughout the evening. His miming must have come as a surprise to those who have not seen his occasional performances in *Hamlet*, and at the end of the second act when he watched the transformation and flight of Odette he filled the theatre with his anguish. His makeup, also, was a lesson to some of our young men who seem to think that the more they plaster on the more attractive they will look.

It was hard on Beryl Grey and John Field that they had to follow such an evening and both are to be congratulated on avoiding anti-climax. Beryl Grey was more brilliant in her solos than Fonteyn but her Odette has not yet found a similar pathos. I think this may be partly due to her having so often to dance the second act only, where expression takes second place to classical execution. John Field makes a fine figure of Siegfried but has as yet little expression. This will doubtless develop as he feels his way into the part. He danced it extremely well and partnered well enough to show that he will do even better as he grows accustomed to this exacting side of the role.

The national dances in *Le Lac des Cygnes* are all rather mediocre but it was a pleasure to watch the crisp precision of Gilbert Vernon in the Spanish dance. This young dancer from South Africa continues to progress steadily.

All through these four weeks I was wondering when Alexander Grant was going to get a chance to show off his qualities, for he is a dancer all visiting Americans pick out immediately. I finished the season still wondering. I believe he might make a vivid Red Knight, and remain at a loss to understand why *Mam'zelle Angot* was not one of the chosen ballets. Admittedly the original American version was a failure, but all the more reason to show what a good ballet Massine made of it with English dancers and to present Grant in a part in which he is unique. There are



Photograph by Edward Mandinian

MOIRA SHEARER AND FREDERICK ASHTON IN THE "FACADE"  
TANGO

several ballets in the Sadler's Wells repertoire which I think would have been better choices for America than those actually taken, and the omission of *Mam'zelle Angot* even on the grounds that it was not by an English choreographer and had been a failure on its first presentation in a very different form, is to my mind an extraordinary lapse.

Life being full of anti-climaxes it was not perhaps surprising that, after the special *réclame* of this season, the company filled in the month before their departure by appearing at three suburban cinemas. However, for the opportunity it gave us of seeing them all again and viewing some of the ballets which remain behind, we were most grateful.

P.W.M.

The Frank Sharman action photograph on the cover is of Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somes in *Le Lac des Cygnes*, Act iii, at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.



# THE SEASON OF 1948-1949 IN SOVIET BALLET

By ELENA ROSLAVLEVA

THE season of 1948-1949 will go down in the history of Soviet ballet as the landmark year of *The Bronze Horseman*.

It has always been a tradition of Russian ballet to create grand spectacles with all the technical equipment of the theatrical apparatus and the magic means of scenic illusion. Both the Bolshoi and Kirov theatres are perfectly equipped for that. But the producers of the ballet conceived the impressive scenes of the flood in the third act, the storm of the second, the majestic scenery of St. Petersburg and the panorama of the fourth act not as a grand pageant, but as serious dramatic parts in the composition of the ballet.

It could not be otherwise. Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* is so truly a Russian, national work. Those

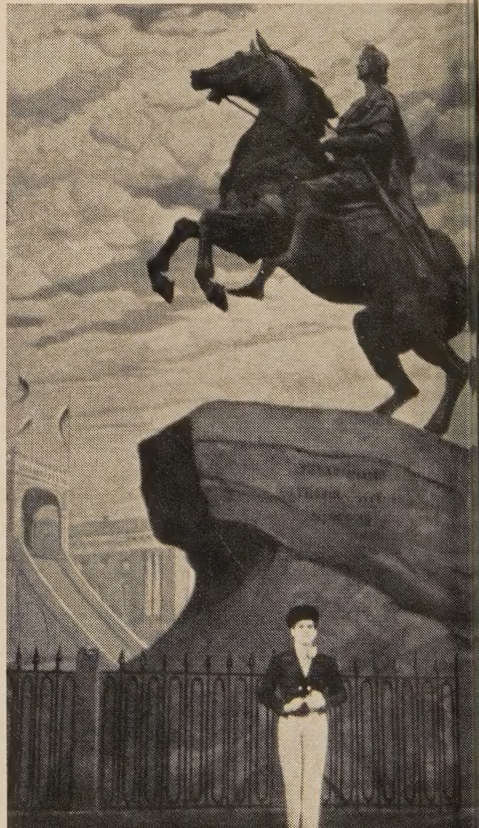
who come to the ballet will look for the values of this great poem, which is an evocation of the magnificent city built by Peter. Therefore the role of the designer of the sets for this ballet was no less important than that of the choreographer. In the person of Professor M. P. Bobishov, Rostislav Zakharov found just the kind of collaborator, and for that, lone Russian spectator (and particularly, of course, those of Leningrad), will continue filling the theatre whenever *The Bronze Horseman* is shown. The ballet is not only good theatre, it is an outstanding choreographic achievement for Rostislav Zakharov. As such, it deserves a special analysis, and I shall return to it in a later article.

Galina Ulanova did not appear in the part of Parasha at the première of *The Bronze Horseman*. She had

ALLA SHELEST AS PARASHA AND BORIS BREGVADZE AS EUGENE IN THE VISION SCENE, "THE BRONZE HORSEMAN," AT LENINGRAD



KONSTANTIN SERGEYEV IN THE FIRST ACT OF THE Leningrad PRODUCTION OF "THE BRONZE HORSEMAN"





sudden acute attack of appendicitis and had to be rushed to the hospital. This was a great misfortune since never has Ulanova been in such good form as in the past season. On December 20th she appeared in *Swan Lake* with tremendous success. Ovarious stopped the show several times. Technically she was excellent, executing the thirty-two *fouettés* with perfect precision, but, as usual, she used technique only as a foundation, enabling fuller expression of an artist. The excellent form she was in became obvious in all other ballets. As Giselle she extorted tears, as Juliet she continued being as fresh and as moving, and seemed to have acquired some new floating qualities. Ulanova has now recovered from her illness, and will be able to dance with the start of the next season.

Olga Lepeshinskaya, who is so good at portraying Russian maidens, danced the part of Parasha for the Moscow première with Vladimir Preobrajensky, while Raisa Struchkova, given the part at short notice on account of Ulanova's illness, presented a more wistful, Ulanova-like Parasha for the second performance, with Yuri Hofman in the difficult and responsible part of Eugene.

The next season will be of outstanding importance in the life of the Bolshoi Theatre, which will celebrate its 150th jubilee in the Spring of 1950.

Among other things, the ballet will commemorate the jubilee by a much-needed new production of *The Sleeping Beauty*. In Leningrad the ballet is preserved in an authentic untouched Petipa version, but time has proved that in order to live on the stage, *The Sleeping Beauty* needs a thoroughly new production, which will retain all of the indisputable Petipa *chef d'oeuvres*, but will make better theatre of the ballet. Of course the main concern will be a most cautious attitude to the beautiful Tchaikovsky score.

The Bolshoi theatre long ago realised the necessity for a new production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, and that is why the ballet has not been in its repertoire for some time. In preparation for the 1950 production the Bolshoi Theatre announced a competition for new sets. Over a hundred artists presented designs for *The Sleeping Beauty*. They were advised that their main guidance should be in the music. The jury awarded the first prize to M. Obolensky. He designed his sets with a fine feeling of the period and the nature of the ballet itself.

Following *Baby Stork*, revived as a full-fledged ballet eleven years after the Moscow school performance, the next success of the Moscow season proper was the new ballet *Mirandolina*, music by Vasilenko, choreography by Vassily Vainonen. The story of *Mirandolina* follows Goldoni's *La Locandiera* (*The Innkeeper*). As in Goldini's piece, the ballet should have been done as a "comedy of situations". The "book" did not always supply the choreographer with such, but when it did, as in the scene of the serenade, sung by two of the unsuccessful

wooers, the result was most amusing. Choreographically one would wish to see, particularly in such scenes as the carnival in the third act, more of the *commedia dell'arte* idiom of the Italian folk theatre. That would lend the ballet a more uniform style.

On the whole *Mirandolina* was very well received by the public, and had a pronounced success. Olga Lepeshinskaya was a sparkling *Mirandolina* full of mischief. Marina Semeyonova was different, more of a woman, but perhaps less of an innkeeper. Yermolayev and Koren were both excellent as the woman-hating cavalier Ripofratta. It is a pity that the librettist and choreographer made the principal scene, when Ripofratta is being charmed by *Mirandolina*, too static. A. Redunsky—an outstanding mime of the Bolshoi—made a properly grotesque count, done in the right style. G. Farmaniantz performed some very high jumps as the Devil in the carnival scene.

Vassily Vainonen, whose *Mirandolina* was found to be not without fault, scored a great success with his dances for Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*. Together with the others responsible for this first-class production he was awarded the Stalin prize of 1948. Vainonen's element is character dance, and he is at his best when given good music such as one has in *The Bartered Bride*, with dancing in each act. Besides a set of delightful and truly national polkas he did a most amusing travelling circus scene. Eugenia Farmaniantz gave an excellent artistic and technical impersonation of the circus dancer.

Ballet in opera received much attention in the season. It is a perfectly normal thing in a theatre the very name of which "Opera and Ballet" indicates that the ballet is merely an incorporate part of the entire body. The problem of casting high quality ballet for operas simply does not exist in Russia as it does elsewhere. The ballet, when it is shown in opera, receives equal attention as far as rehearsal time, costumes or space for dancing are concerned. Fokine's Polovtsian dances, done as an assignment for the opera *Prince Igor*, would never have appeared otherwise. In the season under discussion the Bolshoi revived many classic operas in accordance with the indications left by the late Zhdanov, and, following an established tradition, the best ballet forces were assigned to these opera productions. Working under normal conditions of the ballet company, Leonid Lavrovsky and his cast were able to produce another striking *royaume sous maréne* scene for Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Sadko*, in no way repeating that of *The Hump-backed Horse*.

It goes without saying that the choreographer understood full well the role of ballet in opera—namely that it is introduced not merely for dance's sake but as an integral part of the dramatic development. Lavrovsky proved this understanding in his production of the *Walpurgis Nacht* from *Faust*. Seeking the vision of Helen of Troy, Faust penetrates together with Mephisto





THE SETTING AND ENSEMBLE FOR THE FIRST ACT OF "THE BRONZE HORSEMAN"

into the wild valley of Farsal in the Hartz mountains, where witches meet yearly for the orgy of the Walpurgian night. This was not an easy task for Lavrovsky to cope with. Gounod's music is by no means adequate to the dramatic contents of the scene. It is melodious and "danceable" but in no way does it express the chaos of the gorge to which Mephisto has brought Faust. Lavrovsky has not seen the works of his predecessors in the opera—the last was Fokine—but that was probably a beneficent factor, Lavrovsky likes to follow his own path. He did reach a most impressive choreographic solution. Mephisto brings Faust to a dark, menacing valley. Strange voices, fleeting will o' the wisps, wails of witches are intended to fill Faust with awe. Mephisto makes Faust drink the cup of oblivion, and a fairy-like vision of Hellenic beauty unfolds before him. The dances for the bacchanalia are done in an utmost virtuoso vein and can be coped with only by a technician of the calibre of Lepeshinskaya, who scored deserved ovations. Lavrovsky used the virtuosity of the dances with the idea of emphasising the emotional impact which the scene is supposed to have on Faust. Lavrovsky performed another major achievement in this opera ballet. He has managed to make the choir and solo singers take part in the movement when necessary. Even Ivan Kozlovsky, the celebrated tenor, steps to the

fore in this scene to receive Olga Lepeshinskaya into his arms from Vladimir Preobrajensky, the satyr.

A welcome debut took place in connection with the *Faust* ballet. Olga Lepeshinskaya fell ill suddenly on the eve of the dress rehearsal. Nina Chorokhova, a young dancer who has already attracted attention as Assol in *Crimson Sail*, the Bird in *Baby Stork*, and Maria in *Bakchiserai Fountain*, learned the most difficult part of Helen in one day, and executed it with such success that the Bolshoi management included the part in her repertoire. Chorokhova's history is quite unusual. She was first a student of the circus school, where she did a lot of acrobatics and very little dancing. At the age of fifteen she tried to enter the Bolshoi theatre school and was taken straight into the sixth class. She had a lot of trouble with her arms, not having had the advantage of their being "set" from the beginning, but under the guidance of Ekaterina Gerdt, noted for the softness of her arms and general grace, she cured this defect. In 1939 she graduated from the school and was the only one to be taken into the Bolshoi Theatre from the class.

Vakhtang Chabukiani gave two concerts at the Tchaikovsky Hall, affording those who were not lucky enough to attend the full *Sintatle* at Tbilisi a chance of seeing an excerpt, choreographically the most important in the whole ballet, Avtandil's visit to the kingdom of



Davrish the devil. It was most interesting to watch how Chabukiani used the Georgian technique of male dancing on toes for the part of Davrish the devil. It made Kikaileshvili's feet look just like hoofs, and lent a sharp and appropriate pattern to the dance.

Chabukiani also introduced to Moscow another of his able pupils—Vera Zignadze, a very strong dancer, good both in lyrical and dramatic parts. She was most moving and ethereal in a scene from *Giselle*, Act 2, with Kikaileshvili as an able partner.

Chabukiani himself danced several numbers with great success. The most interesting of these were *The Bird* and *The Elf*, containing some new steps invented by the dancer and choreographer. After appearing only once at the Bolshoi in *Don Quixote* with Olga Lepeshinskaya for a worthy partner, Chabukiani went to Leningrad, where he appeared with unparalleled success in four ballets—*Don Quixote*, *Giselle*, *La Bayadère* and *Laurencia*—the last choreographed by himself in 1939. He is expected for another, longer visit to Leningrad for the next season, both to dance and choreograph a ballet.

*The Bronze Horseman* was first shown in Leningrad, on March 17th. Since the days of *Flame of Paris* Leningrad has been the laboratory of Soviet ballet. All its important achievements were first choreographed in Leningrad. But *The Bronze Horseman* was not the only major work of the Kirov ballet. Early in the summer, Lavrovsky specially came from Moscow to revive *Romeo and Juliet* originally produced in Leningrad in 1940. Since Lavrovsky re-created many scenes for his Moscow version, the revival of the ballet at its birthplace was indeed a new undertaking for the company, particularly since many of its new members were not acquainted with the ballet. Robert Gerbek, an unrivalled, truly Shakespearean Tybalt, was the only member of the original main cast who took part in the present revival. It was natural that Lavrovsky wanted to stage his latest, more mature version of the ballet. He worked with the cast according to his established artistic principles—each character grows and develops in the course of the spectacle,—demanding from the smallest member of the company a deep feeling of his part. *Romeo and Juliet* was shown in Leningrad just once—on July 17th, one day before the season closed with *The Bronze Horseman*. The revival was a great success. The title parts were taken by Tatiana Vecheslova and Semen Kaplan. They could not replace Ulanova and Sergeyev—creators of these roles, but Vecheslova's Juliet was interesting in her own, more "earthly" way, while Kaplan made a very passionate Romeo. A new find was Boris Bregvadze as Mercutio. His was a difficult task. The original Mercutio was the late Andrei Lopukhov, great actor and character dancer. Bregvadze created his own, youthful, daring and very individual Mercutio, scoring great success.

Promotion of young talent is a determined policy of the Kirov Theatre. Its artistic director for ballet, Peter Gusev, who for many years headed the Moscow school of choreography, knows how to develop and mature young artists, and does not hesitate to entrust them with most responsible parts. In the past season this policy bore abundant fruit.

Young dancers, mentioned as promising in our review of 1946-47, have danced in the past season leading parts in full-length ballets.

Olga Moiseyeva, Vaganova's graduate of 1947, danced the "Shades" act from *La Bayadère* for the graduation performance. She was far from perfect in the difficult part of Nikia, but the poetry and grace of her movements were most promising. Yuri Slonimsky wrote at the time: "Such dancers make real ballerinas." His prophecy came true. On June 25th, 1949, two years almost to a day after her graduation, Moiseyeva danced the whole of *La Bayadère*. She was flawless as far as the most difficult technicalities of the role and beauty of line were concerned.

Above that, even the uninitiated present at the performance felt that a big and individual talent was unfolding itself in the old ballet. Boris Bregvadze has

TATIANA VECHESLOVA IN "ESMERALDA"





also made giant strides since his debut in 1947. In three days he prepared the most responsible part of Eugene in the second cast of *The Bronze Horseman*. He is one of those dancers whose mechanics are never visible on the stage, and who is therefore able to concentrate on the dramatic side of the role. Besides the already mentioned individual interpretation of the part of Mercutio, Bregvadze danced the *danseur noble* part of Solor in *La Bayadère*. Another debutante of *La Bayadère* of June 25th, when each part was filled by the younger generation, was Liubov Voishnis, a very striking Gamsati, the wicked bride of Solor. Endowed with a dramatic talent, she is a very expressive dancer. Askold Makarov, who has also danced in the season the part of the Prince in *Swan Lake*, danced the part of Solor opposite Moiseyeva. He is making a very good classical dancer of the severe, noble style. Victor Sukhov and Yuri Grigorovitch danced in turn the most difficult interpolated dance of the Golden God, created by Nicolai Zubkovsky for himself for last year's revival of *La Bayadère*. Youthful Kekisheva, just out of Vaganova's class, was very light in the "Manu" dance.

This list of young dancers who were given leading parts in the season could be continued. It is sufficient to say that the Leningrad ballet has at present a crop of young talent, carefully guided by Gusev from day to day, and reminiscent of the period some twenty years ago, when a whole constellation of dancers—Ulanova, Dudinskaya, Vecheslova, Jordan, Sergeyev, appeared in Leningrad.

The third new ballet produced in Leningrad was the revival by Vaganova of her *Esmeralda* after an interval of eight years. Soviet ballet, as a rule, edits its revivals of classical ballets. What is immortal and truly classical is invariably preserved. *Esmeralda* has suffered many changes since its first production by Jules Perrot in London in 1844, with Grisi as Esmeralda and Perrot himself as the poet Gringoire. The Leningrad revival took place just a hundred years after Perrot's première of *Esmeralda* on the St. Petersburg stage, with Fanny Elssler as Esmeralda and himself as Gringoire. Perrot was a great realist of ballet, creator of dramatic ballets, aiming at a consecutive story. But much of his work has faded, while a good deal of it, particularly in the third act, was considerably dressed up by Petipa. Vaganova revised the ballet, carefully maintaining numerous *dances d'action* composed by Perrot, such as Esmeralda's dance at the Court of Fleur de Lys. Esmeralda has to dance in the presence of the man she loves and his future bride—a grand lady of the court. She visibly suffers as she dances, she would rather run away from the festive surroundings, but the devoted Gringoire begs her to continue, and tries to help. Another *pas d'action* from this ballet is one where Esmeralda, preparing for her appearance at the court of Fleur de Lys, tries to teach dancing to the clumsy

Gringoire. In Vaganova's production these masterpieces of Perrot stand out because she has done away with trifles, such as the artificial "basket" dance introduced by Petipa. Vaganova paid much attention to realistic presentation of the "Beggars' Court" and brought the ballet closer to Hugo. She was very much assisted in her task by V. Hodasevitch's magnificent new sets—the original ones were destroyed when the Kirov theatre was damaged in war-time,—and by the intelligent co-operation of the cast. Tatiana Vecheslova, the pre-war Esmeralda, took the part again. Vecheslova, a graduate of the same class as Ulanova, is a strong dancer on a dramatic plane.

*Esmeralda* is not showing in Moscow at present, but last spring Semeyonova appeared in an abridged version of the ballet at the Tchaikovsky Hall. She danced beautifully, and it was a great pleasure to watch her magnificent line and poise. Leningrad saw a new Esmeralda in the person of Inna Izraileva, a gifted dancer and the only graduate of the Moscow school of the Leningrad stage. It is said that if her debut in *La Bayadère* last year led to the role of Esmeralda, then the latter indicates that she should be entrusted with

OLGA LEPESHINSKAYA, PEOPLE'S ARTIST OF THE U.S.S.R.





*Giselle*. Izraileva's Esmeralda was a naive, fragile, pure child, who has accidentally blossomed out in the "Beggars' Court," rather than Vecheslova's child of the gypsies. In a way Izraileva was closer to what Hugo had visualised in his early romantic creation.

A special "Evening of Vaganova" was organised in honor of her great services to the art of ballet in the course of fifty years. The concert took place on March 29th at the Leningrad white marble Philharmonic Hall, but several auditoriums of its size could not have housed all who wished to be present at Vaganova's recital. Vaganova's best pupils, both mature and young, took part. The first half of the programme consisted of several waltzes and variations composed by Vaganova herself for such of her pupils as Vecheslova and Dudinskaya. Galina Kirillova and Semen Kaplan danced a number from the Vaganova pre-war version of *Swan Lake*. The programme included famous classical numbers, such as *Pas de Diane* from *Esmeralda* (at the court of Fleur de Lys) with Zheleznova as Diane and Boris Bregvadze as Acteon, and the *Grand pas* from *Paquita*. This faded Petipa ballet is not shown as a whole any longer, but its *grand pas* remains a classic in which several first-class dancers appear at the same time, forming a rare ensemble. To see Vaganova-trained dancers do this number is an

exquisite pleasure. In this concert it was danced by Alla Shelest and Kaplan with Nonna Yastrebova, Galina Kirillova, Olga Jordan, Inna Izraileva and other exemplary Vaganova pupils.

Galina Ulanova danced the *Dying Swan* in the first part, and then had to rush to catch a train for Moscow.

Vaganova was invited at the end of the season to attend the first post-war graduation exams at the Kiev school of choreography. The director of this school, Galina Berezova, is another Vaganova pupil, the only on whom she considers to have fully acquired her pedagogical method. Berezova put on *Casse Noisette* and choreographed a *Ukrainian Suite* with a cast of pupils highly commended by Mme. Vaganova. The presence of the great teacher was of extreme importance to the school and company of the Kiev ballet, which has produced several ballets last season, such as *Lileia*, not shown anywhere else, and a very successful *Cinderella*, newly choreographed by People's Artist Sergei Sergeyev, a first-class choreographer of the older generation. The season was a fruitful one for ballet all over the country.

The Kharkov ballet was first to produce a new ballet *Danko*, story after Maxim Gorky, music by V. Nakhabin, choreography by V. Litvinenko. The Minsk Opera and Ballet Theatre produced a new ballet, *Kniaz-Ozero*, music by Zolotarev.

## TERPSICHORE WITHOUT TEARS

By DONALD WRAY

A number of definitive synopses of standard ballets have been drawn up for the benefit of those tyros who, unaided, are confounded by the incomprehensibility of the art, and accordingly, baffled and antagonistic to its performance, retire into the arms of Jive and Flicks. Four such synopses are appended below; any deviations from them in practice are unauthorised and wholly deplorable.

LES SYLPHIDES (The Slimming Tablets).

Two lovers meet in a graveyard at night. When the moon comes out, the girl sees that her young man is clad only in a waistcoat, shirtsleeves, and long woolly pants. Deeply shocked and blushing furiously, she flees from him in horror; the young man, uncomprehending (he's a bit soft), follows her. They are driven back by hordes of white midges—shifty, wavering insects with an excessive individuality which wrecks precision formation flying. The girl makes a successful break-away. The night air is cold and the young man rubs his legs to keep warm. His face lights up as he remembers his trousers; he rushes off to get them. The midges

counter-attack and drive the lovers back again, hopping and jiggling with the pain of the stings. They huddle together in fear. In the church nearby, someone is playing Chopin on the organ, using the pedals only; it's ghastly. The midges close in.

LE LAC DES CYGNES (or Have Uppers no Souls?).

Some boys in a rambling party have lost their ball and look for it among the fronds round an old pond. Their Club Leader appears and tells them to scatter and search for it. While he is alone, childishly shooting at toy ducks with a Big Boy's Bumper Archery Set, a young lady from a nearby tennis party appears. She asks the Leader if he and his boys will help her out. She and her friends have entered for a tournament and none of the men have turned up for the mixed doubles; if they do not play, the villainous umpire will disqualify their team from the league. The Leader agrees to help her and goes off to find his boys.

Now we see the tennis party in full swing. After a preliminary knock-up, all against all, two tall thin girls play out the women's singles. The women's doubles



follows, played by four short girls, cheerful lasses but inclined to incur foot faults.

The Leader and his boys arrive and the girls go into a huddle to decide upon partners. The Leader plumps for the girl he first met, for she has a shorter skirt than the others and should be more mobile. This proves to be the case, and he partners her nobly, albeit with every sign of distress, lifting her on high for volleys and smashes and supporting her for the difficult ground shots. After a particularly long set she becomes exhausted, has the vapours, swoons into the arms of the ballboy, recovers, and wins a brilliant solo rally and the match.

The other players walk off disconsolately, leaving the happy winners to face the reporters and cameramen. The lady's trainer appears and beckons her angrily; she must get back to her exercises and vitamin pills. As soon as she is out of sight the Leader slumps to ground. His feet are killing him.

MIRACLE IN THE GORBALS (or Glasgow goes Tory).

It is the eve of a bye-election, and all is bustle and excitement. The Conservative candidate, mature and upright, ingratiates himself with the constituents by his maturity and uprightness.

The agent of the Labour Party, a healthy girl and deservedly popular, dresses in her party's colours; this is misinterpreted by some of the high-spirited local lads who pay her considerable attention. As a result the Conservative support suffers, and the Tory agent, a drab unmodulated girl, attempts to commit suicide by immersion in the Clyde.

The Labour candidate arrives; his plebeian origin is obvious from his sandals and dirty vest. He revives the Tory agent by artificial respiration. The crowd is delighted by this non-partisan action. The Tory candidate is furious: more votes gone. As a counter-gesture he offers to address some envelopes for the Socialist agent, but is flung out when he addresses his attentions to her instead.

A routine meeting between the Labour candidate and his agent is seen by a small boy. This lad had been kissed by a politician in the General Election, and has therefore got a thing about politicians. He tells of the meeting to the local men, attributing a nefarious purpose. The men are enraged to think that their political levy should be frittered away on frivolous pastimes, and attack the candidate as he leaves the party office. Discouraged by this hostile attitude, he rolls in the street in transports of rage; he forfeits his deposit.

The two agents walk away hand in hand. Whatever happens, they collect their fees.

LA BELLE AU BOIS DORMANT (Beauty Queen found Unconscious in Wood).

All the reporters have been invited to scrutinise the Royal Baby, and arrive at Court eager to gush over its

excessive chubbiness and immobility. But one has been forgotten: the vinegar-visaged Carabosse, columnist and critic, whose pen is sharper than her points. Black with fury, she gatecrashes in to the garden party and tears the Court P.R.O. off a strip. She threatens to write an adverse critique of the new Princess's clothes when the latter reaches the age of Fath, hopes and charity concerts. The King and Queen plead with Carabosse, but to no avail. She storms out in a veritable lightning of press photographers' flash bulbs. All this is very dreary and is merely an excuse for the stalls to be a half-hour late without missing the ballerina.

The years roll by, and the Princess grows up to be some dish. The Queen, who has not aged perceptibly (see the face cream adverts on back of programme), tells the Princess it is high time she settled down. Four suitors are on hand: one is an Indian whose father runs racehorses; the others are mid-European, less romantic but safer. The Princess is undecided which to choose. She subtly indicates this by teetering alarmingly as she is partnered by each in turn; thus can movement express the writhings of the intellect. Each suitor, expecting the others to be more mundane, has only a rose to offer. This cuts no ice with the Princess, who knows how much it costs to run a castle these days.

The gaiety is at its height when Carabosse arrives and hands the Princess a press-cutting. It is a cruel attack on the Princess's clothes, critically comparing her skirts with the fashionable hemline height. The Princess shrieks, and takes an overdose of phenol-barbitone.

A doctor is sought to treat her; he fights his way through miles of clinging scenery to her bedside and revives her. When the Princess awakens, one glance at the doctor's sensible well-made clothes tells her that he is from the hard currency area. She marries him.

The happy couple order a Royal Command performance to celebrate the wedding. Some of the most famous variety acts on the boards are seen, the stars being the "Blue Birds" the greatest aerialists to leave the circus ring. The Royal Couple, disgusted by this display of vulgar exhibitionism, leave their box and prove they can do just as well themselves. The reception breaks up in disorder.

## *Exhibition of Ballet Paintings*

Theyre Lee-Elliott's latest exhibition is being held at Nell Gwynn House, Sloane Avenue, London, S.W. 3 until November 5th and probably for at least another week after that date. He is almost the only modern artist to have solved successfully the problem of translating Ballet into terms of paint on canvas and the present exhibition will delight all ballet lovers. Mr. Lee-Elliott is expecting to have a similar exhibition in New York shortly.



# A NOT SO STARRY SEASON

THE something less than successful "Stars of the Ballet" season at the Princes Theatre (August 1st to 20th) seems to have been taken as proof in some quarters that English audiences do not care for the recital type of ballet entertainment. All that it has really proved, of course, is that London audiences are not so easily fooled by grandiose titles that they do not recognise negligible choreography, mediocre dancing, bowdlerised versions of the famous classical *pas de deux* and an almost complete lack of taste in presentation. This season will almost certainly put a stop to any further attempts in the same manner and to that extent it has served a useful purpose.

There was very little in these three weeks that one could look back on with any pleasure. The best presented item was the Chopin Ballade choreographed by Janine Charrat and Serge Peretti and danced by Nina Vyroubova and Peretti (who also saw that it was properly staged and lit). Unfortunately it came at the end of an evening when one was already exhausted by two hours of undiluted Chopin music on to which a series of hastily knocked-together bits and pieces had been strung. The "fragments" of *Les Sylphides* also bore

YVETTE CHAUVIRÉ IN "LA MORT DU CYGNE"



little resemblance to the pieces we know and this I regretted, for Nina Vyroubova in a long tutu is the perfect reincarnation of a Romantic ballerina.

It was sad to have seen Yvette Chauviré to such poor advantage though her understandable nervousness with so insecure a partner must have affected her considerably. She was at her best in *La Mort du Cygne* in which the expressiveness of her body was a significant lesson in mime. I don't think anyone could have made much of Lifar's *L'Ecuylère* which I felt vaguely would have been rather unpleasant if it had been comprehensible. It did serve to show, however, that Vladimir Skouratoff was dancing extremely well and with greater expression than heretofore. He is still inclined to "snatch" with his hands when he turns, but he is always both charming and virile.

Alexandre Kalioujny made a tremendous impression when he appeared in London three years ago with the Nouveau Ballet de Monte Carlo, dancing such roles as the Polovtsian Chief and the Golden Slave. He subsequently made an even greater reputation in Paris as a classical dancer when he went to the Paris Opera as *premier danseur étoile*. Word of his prowess has been steadily seeping into this country ever since that time so that it is no more than correct to say that on the first night audiences were agog to see him. Something, however, was sadly wrong. He entirely failed to live up to his advance reputation, his partnering was perilously unsafe and the tights and tunics of classical ballet were unkind to his particular build. It was unfortunate that we had no opportunity of seeing him in the kind of work in which he made his reputation here.

It will be clear from all this that the season was more than a little dire. It was; but it had its hilarious moments (which had nothing to do with the allegedly humorous item, *La Répétition au Violon*, which flung me for one into paroxysms of gloom). The excerpts from *Sylvia* were even funnier than one had dared to hope, and there was a little item called *Sacrifice* arranged by Boris Kniazeff to THE Rachmaninov prelude which for good, clean fun had Danny Kaye beaten by a mile. It appeared to take place in front of a hoopla stall from which the young gentleman whose muscular development we had been in no danger of overlooking during the previous fortnight (and who was even more *dégagé* in the final week) finally picked up a dagger which he plunged into his midriff. It was in this same programme that we were expected to endure *Concerto de Varsovie* (Warsaw Concerto to we poor ignorant English) in which a young lady who, judging from the red band round her arm, had recently been vaccinated, was visited by a





fraught Polish type in a tartan headband, a memento one supposes from his earlier sojourn in Scotland.

Nathalie Krassovska danced beautifully in a *Pas de Deux Romantique* to the "Snowflake" music of Tschaikovsky's *Nutcracker* and it was not her fault that some of us have reached the pitch when we simply cannot take another Black Swan.

Ana Nevada with her Spanish dances was the one unqualified success of the season though I found her less effective than previously, possibly because she did not have her Spanish pianist, for there is a quite different technique used by Spanish pianists for playing their native music and no Englishman, however talented, can hope to acquire it overnight.

In case most of the foregoing sounds harsh I will show my genuine kindness of heart by omitting to mention further the indifferent dancing of the less than indifferent oddments which made up the greater part of this unhappy season.

P.W.M.

NATHALIE KRASSOVSKA, WHO DANCED WITH "STARS OF THE BALLET" AND FOR SEVERAL YEARS HAS BEEN A BALLERINA WITH THE BALLET RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO, IS APPEARING AS GUEST ARTIST WITH THE BALLET RAMBERT DURING THEIR SEASON AT THE KING'S THEATRE, HAMMERSMITH, WHICH BEGAN ON

OCTOBER 17TH.

# CLASSIC NATIONAL DANCES IN THE THEATRE

## PART I

By FERNAU HALL

THERE are a number of difficult problems involved in the theatrical presentation of folk dances. Normally such dances are intended to be seen from all sides, and have elaborate patterns of repetition which derive from the ancient ritual symbolism of the dances. Even if they are performed on a stage by natives of the region exactly as in their own villages, the effect of the dances is falsified: the theatre has its own laws, and to the extent that folk dances cut across these laws they appear meaningless and even boring. That is why choreographers make serious changes in folk dances—altering the patterns so that they are effective when seen from the front, cutting many of the repeats, mixing together elements of different dances, introducing effects of climax, and using professional dance-technique to polish up the line of the movements. The final result is a compromise of which the artistic value depends on the taste and skill with which the adaptation has been done.

Certain traditional styles, however, are so highly developed that they need only imaginative lighting to make their full effect in a theatre. Pre-eminent among these styles are the classic dances of India and the flamenco dances of the Spanish gypsies. The problem here is not so much the adaptation of the dances as the education of the audiences: quite apart from the unfamiliarity of the conventional gestures, the dances are so powerfully expressive and technically complex that audiences find the same difficulty in assimilating them that they find with any other highly developed but unfamiliar art-form. This is the reason why the pioneers who introduced these styles to the Western theatre always tended to sugar the pill: they performed dances incorporating certain elements of the traditional dances but with only a small proportion of the violence and complexity of the real thing.

Indian dances have been popular in Europe for a



generation, but it is only recently that European audiences have had a chance of getting to know the real thing. Beginning in 1908 Ruth St. Denis had great success with pseudo-Indian dances like *Cobra Dance* and *Dance of the Red and Gold Sari*: here the emphasis was mainly on sinuous arm movements, vaguely allied to the arm movements of dances all over the Middle and Far East. The foot movements were very simple, and the dances showed no influence from the various Indian classic styles—which at that time were despised in India either because of their association with prostitution, or because they were performed in remote villages cut off from the rest of India, and were never seen under good conditions in the cities.

These classic dances preserve elements of the ritual dance-dramas performed at the very dawn of Indian civilisation some four thousand years ago, but for centuries they were intensively developed at Indian courts as an integral part of the Indian drama. The classic dances are comparable with Western ballet at its best: the line and angle of every movement is precisely adjusted to make its due effect on the audience "out in front," and the performers are professionals who begin their long and arduous training at an early age.

Uday Shankar was the first to give European audiences an idea of the nobility and poetic lyricism of Indian

classic dances. None of his dances and ballets were exact reproductions of traditional Indian material. He trained and rehearsed his artists in Paris and at Dartington Hall, evolving a highly personal style compounded of certain elements of the classic and folk dances of India and the dances of Assam, Cambodia, Java and Japan. In his construction of the various items he drew on his experience of the classical ballet and of the various branches of the free dance. The superbly rehearsed performances by Uday Shankar and his company made a vivid impression on audiences in Europe and America. The dances had all the fascination of the East and yet were simple and easy to follow.

Ram Gopal arrived in England just before the war, and found an audience ready to welcome Indian dancing. His extraordinary beauty of face and body and his hypnotic stage personality made a powerful impression, in spite of the fact that his vocabulary of movement was very limited and his dances lacked variety. He returned in 1947 with a new company and gave English audiences their first chance of seeing authentic Bharata Natyam (the classic style of the Tamil-speaking parts of South India) and female Kathak (the classic style of certain cities of North India, bringing together elements of the ancient Hindu dance and Moslem influences). Both styles are performed by solo dancers, and it was a relatively simple matter to fit individual dances in these styles into mixed programmes, along with adaptations of folk dances and synthetic modern dances. Audiences had no difficulty with the pure dances of Bharata Natyam and with the Kathak dances (where the story is subordinated to the virtuosity of foot-work); in the padams of Bharata Natyam—where the dancer interprets a song word for word—the audience was helped by preliminary spoken explanations.

The third great classic style of India—Kathakali—is a form of dance-drama, and though short solo dances in this style had been performed as part of the programmes of the Shankar and Gopal companies, it was not possible to form any idea of the true grandeur and variety of the style until Sivaram presented a shortened version of a complete Kathakali dance-drama, *King Rugmangadan*. The shortening was made necessary by differences between Indian and European theatrical traditions: any Indian theatrical show or concert is liable to last all night. Sivaram retained the towering head-dresses, billowing skirts and mask-like make-up of the traditional performances, and thus enabled English audiences to savour the full beauty of the foot-movements and exaggerated facial expressions—designed to be seen by audiences of several thousand. Though English audiences could not follow the words which are sung in synchronism with the dramatic action, the Kathakali abhinaya (dramatic expression) proved so clear and emphatic that they could follow the story without difficulty. This opened up exciting possibilities: in

RAM WEARING THE TRADITIONAL COSTUME AND MAKEUP OF

THE KATHAKALI DANCE-DRAMA

Photograph by Deste





Malabar there are over a hundred dance-dramas still being performed.

The visit of Mrinalini Sarabhai and her company was no less important in showing that European audiences were ready to appreciate the real thing. Two traditional Kathakali dancers (Panicker and Sivasanker) showed the enormous variety of Kathakali technique, and Panicker showed that this fabulous technique could be combined with a vivid stage personality. The performances by solo *danseuses* of pure dances in Bharata Natyam and Kathakali styles were sometimes lacking in authority and precision of line and rhythm, but had the merit of complete authenticity: Mrinalini Sarabhai brought with her the appropriate traditional musicians, and presented these items at the correct tempo and without cuts.

Like Sivaram, Mrinalini Sarabhai showed various Kathakali items with the men in a simple dhoti, without the elaborate traditional costumes, head dresses and make-up. This had certain disadvantages. The Kathakali technique has become highly specialised through the centuries, with every detail exactly adapted to make a powerful effect when seen by thousands

of spectators as part of a performance on a wooden platform in front of a temple. Unlike the Bharata Natyam dancer, the Kathakali dancer turns his feet in (keeping the knees turned out) and strikes the stage with the edge of the foot, so as to make the greatest possible noise on the resonant platform. He makes high kicks and leaps which cause his skirts to billow up, and his make-up and facial play are designed to be seen by the reddish light of a large oil lamp. When Kathakali dancers appear without their traditional costumes and make-up their leg movements and facial expressions are liable to appear crude and even ugly. On the other hand the prestige of Kathakali in India has suffered through performances outside Malabar by solo dancers who rely too much on hand-gestures and facial expressions, and Mrinalini Sarabhai has sought to combat this resultant prejudice against Kathakali by presenting her dancers in simple costumes which make clearly visible the remarkable complexity of the leg and body movements. Western audiences found these performances in simple costumes no less entertaining and instructive.

*To be continued.*

## ON BEHALF OF THE AUDIENCE

By KATHRINE SORLEY WALKER

AS the years pass, it becomes apparent that most of the working members of the ballet profession have no real idea as to the constitution of the ballet audience. From their occasional references, in books or lectures, it would seem to be a monster—equally menacing in support or opposition, impelled to ridiculous conduct by unworthy motives, ignorant not only of the historical and technical background of ballet but of the rudiments of social good manners, and lacking in any kind of standards. It is time that this situation was discussed with greater understanding.

It is, of course, undeniable that a percentage of the ballet public fits the worst character that anyone can describe. It behaves abominably, in the theatre, at stage-doors, by letter, or (when ill-fortune permits) in print. It is unscrupulous, libellous, and unbalanced, and the less power it is allowed, either to influence or to hurt, the better for the health of ballet in general.

These horrors are, however, a loud-voiced minority. What of the others—the remaining three-quarters of any typical ballet audience—who seem so much a mystery to performer and management? Of this section two-thirds can be called the casual or semi-casual public. In this category come the people who are in the house for the first time or those who turn up very occasionally.

Among the latter may be counted many users of press tickets; for anyone whose experience of ballet is limited to the occasions when a company invites him to attend must be deemed at least semi-casual. These people, whatever their shortcomings in the way of knowledge, do not possess any of the vices associated with the ballet public in the artist's mind. They are merely a typical part of any theatre audience and as such they deserve to be treated.

There is, however, a remaining section of the ballet audience, about which too little is known on the other side of the curtain: the people who should not be described as balletomanes, for apart from their belief in the importance of ballet, and their resolution to support what they consider best, they cannot be considered as abnormal citizens. They are not maniacs; they do not intrude themselves either on those they admire or those they dislike; they are not to be regarded as a mass, for they are individuals, with sometimes only their interest in ballet as a point of contact.

Nevertheless, some generalisations can be made about them. They are on the whole products of British ballet. This does not mean that they never went to foreign ballet pre-1939, nor that they have not seen every visiting company since the war; but, generally





"LA GIARA" ("THE JAR"). *Left to Right*, GILDA MAOCCHI, UGO DELL'ARA, LUCIANA NEVARRA, F. BRINATI, T. PESSINA  
 TWO BALLETS IN THE REPERTOIRE OF LA SCALA, MILAN, BOTH CHOREOGRAPHED BY MARGARET WALLMAN  
 "PASSACAGLIA," TO MUSIC BY BACH, ARR. RESPIGHI. *Centre*, OLGA AMATI, UGO DELL'ARA AND GILDA MAOCCHI





speaking, they have had their regard for ballet made concrete by the performances of two British companies, the Sadler's Wells Ballet and the Ballet Rambert. Considering the growing reputation of both, it is unnecessary to say that in watching them these balletgoers have acquired standards of a considerable height.

The members of this group have a pronounced ability for making their own decisions about productions or performances offered to them. They are not influenced by any of the present writers on ballet, who are oracles only to the novice or to the minor dancer. It is therefore not surprising when they disagree among themselves. What is remarkable is that so frequently they come, independently, to the same conclusions; and these, in several instances, bear no relation to the body of critical writing which reaches the outside public.

These regular balletgoers are roughly in an age-group of 25 to 45, comprising both sexes with women in predominance. They belong to the middle-class, and have sufficient leisure and money to indulge a hobby. Instead of the accepted idea that they lack education, or at the best have only a veneer of culture, they are mostly well-schooled and often specialists in other lines. They are by no means limited in interest, but can talk intelligently not only about subjects related to ballet, but on social, political or scientific matters. This is not to suggest that they transcend other cross-sections of the public interested in the arts. It is merely to scotch the belief that they are an inferior body.

It would, one feels, astonish most ballet artists to realise the intelligence of the interest this part of the audience shows in ballet. If they have not the thorough knowledge of technique possessed by the teacher or skilled dancer, at least they know enough to tell when steps are well or badly performed. If they have not the musical education sufficient to read scores or criticise in detail, they are yet capable of realising when tempi are incorrectly rendered either by dancer or orchestra. They may not be able to describe or remember the full sequence of steps in an *enchaînement*: but on many details of production their memories are frequently more correct than that of the choreographer himself. They are, moreover, in a special position; they know how the ballet—or the dancer's performance—appears to the audience. This is a perspective which no member of the profession can hope to arrive at: and because ballet is of the theatre it is one of outstanding importance.

Out of all this, what emerges? It is not enough simply to admit the existence of this core of intelligence in the audience. Some regard should be paid to it, and use made of it. As things stand, the belief in the hysterical balletomane isolates ballet artists within their own circles. They naturally decide that they have no reliable guide but their teacher (who after all is primarily

a technical instructor), their choreographer (who occasionally needs some guide himself), or their friends (who are unlikely to remain unprejudiced). So they continue to work without the stimulus of an detached outlook. Any ballet performance is incomplete without the expression of its effect on the audience; but if the dancer is to accept all such reactions as ill-educated comment from inferior beings it will have a sad effect on his ego.

Is it impossible, then, for a method to be devised in which this section of the audience might offer its reasoned suggestions, criticisms or admiration to companies and artists? At present, to write letters or ask questions at lectures are so largely the modes of attack of the maniac public that they leave little opening for the sane, and there are no other ways for the audiences to reach the ears of those who ought to be most interested to hear them. No one will suggest that the audience should exercise authority in matters about which it has no practical experience, but surely its suggestions should be considered with sympathy over matters of repertoire (for it is the audience that has to pay for its seat and sit through the ballet) and matters of casting (for the ability of the dancer to match the standard of the audience should be the criterion here, rather than any off-stage considerations).

This could perhaps be achieved in the first instance by compiling a questionnaire to which any sufficiently interested member of the audience might reply. This could aim at discovering the background knowledge of the balletgoer, as well as gathering views on contemporary matters. Then those who appeared most qualified to act for the reasonable public, selected by a panel of disinterested people, could at six-monthly intervals be asked to furnish further suggestions in writing, and so form a kind of advisory body from the ranks of the audience. It should not be too much to ask that the people who in the long run pay for the dancing might be allowed, within limits, to call for the dancer and the dance.

### *Sadler's Wells in New York*

An air letter from Mary Clarke arrived just as I was correcting the page proofs of this issue. Written immediately after the first night on October 9th (at 2.45 in the morning to be precise) it more than confirms that the English newspapers by no means exaggerated the triumph of the occasion. The whole company, says Mary Clarke, danced as they have never danced before and, above all, Margot Fonteyn gave an inspired performance which had the whole audience cheering from the Rose Adagio onwards. Beryl Grey also made an immediate appeal to the American audience and the third great success of the evening was Frederick Ashton as Carabosse.





ion photograph by Frank Sharman

ALICIA MARKOVA AND ANTON DOLIN WITH THE BALLET RAMBERT IN THE FINALE OF "NUTCRACKER"

## ARENA BALLET AGAIN

THE five performances by Markova and Dolin with the Ballet Rambert at Harringay Arena from August 27th to September 1st seemed the most successful attempt yet at presenting Ballet under almost impossible conditions. At least there was no pretence that it was taking place in an olde worlde or a Venetian garden, and the seats came right down to the stage on three sides so that hundreds more people were able to obtain at any rate a reasonable view. The entrances at the back of the stage were also as unobtrusive and inoffensive as possible, though of course this problem of restriction in coming on and getting off will have to remain insoluble. Though no genuine ballet lover could ever be happy watching standard ballets of the repertoire in these circumstances, there was an honesty about the whole presentation which must earn a good mark on the credit side.

Works such as *Giselle* and the second act of *Le Lac des Cygnes* cannot hope to be moving to the newcomer

seeing them from odd angles and at great distances though they may survive on choreographic interest for those fortunate enough to have a straight-on view. *Gala Performance*, without the introduction which sets the atmosphere, was an almost total loss because the audience very understandably did not catch on until it was nearly over. When they did, they loved it, but it was too late. *Simple Symphony*, on the other hand, proved itself the best ballet so far for showing on an arena stage. The patterns were equally effective from all angles and the dancers were able to make excellent use of the space, Paula Hinton's wonderful leap coming into its own, as it did in *Gala Performance* and the *pas de trois* in *Le Lac des Cygnes*. *Simple Symphony* is obviously the kind of ballet that a stadium demands.

This and the *solis* and *pas de deux* of the two principals were the great successes of this brief season. Markova's *Autumn Song*, arranged for her by Nijinska, and her *Dying Swan* (however strongly we may feel that this



belongs to Pavlova alone) took this enormous stage and filled the auditorium with poetry. Perhaps, after all, Arena Ballet may count itself justified if it can bring such artistry within the reach of thousands.

Finally, a low obeisance and a special bouquet for Annette Chappell who on the first night, when Margaret Hill unhappily injured her ankle in *Simple Symphony*, took over her part in *Nutcracker* at literally a quarter of

an hour's notice, learning it during the interval between the two ballets and dancing it with complete assurance (and only one missed entrance) in addition to her own part as the leader of the Mirlitons. That is real trouping, and so was her performance three days later, again in Margaret Hill's place, as the Queen of the Wilis in *Giselle*.

P.W.M.

## THE LACK OF EXPRESSION IN ENGLISH DANCERS—IS IT A QUALITY OR A DEFECT?

By JEAN LAURENT

I have just spent a month in England. Every night I went to the theatre and have now seen the greater part of the repertoire of the various ballet companies. Later I shall hope to analyse the qualities of each of them. Here, I should like to co-ordinate my general impressions in an all-over survey. After seeing Sadler's Wells, Ballet Rambert, International Ballet and Metropolitan Ballet, what struck me most was the quality of discipline in English Ballet, an almost naïve respect for out of date traditions and, above all, the lack of personality in the stars.

English dancers have often been reproached for this coldness. On the other hand, I appreciated it very much in the *ensembles*. It gives a style to the *corps de ballet*. Thus, in the second and fourth acts of *Le Lac des Cygnes* I admired the cleanness and precision of the impeccable *ensemble*. Nothing distracted the eye; it was the perfection of inexpressiveness.

In France, on the other hand, we suffer from an exasperating individualism. The *corps de ballet*, in general, is execrable. The very worst dancer believes herself to be a soloist and imagines that a strong enough personality makes up for a lack of technique. It is always easy to scorn what one does not possess. So able a choreographer as Roland Petit has well understood the danger: in his small company he has done away with the *corps de ballet* and, except for the *grands pas de deux* in his repertoire he mounts only works for a number of soloists.

But this discipline, this mechanical precision which I admire in the *ensembles*, is quite insufficient when it applies to a star. Here, technique is no longer an end, but a means. In France, each star has a very distinct personality. Technique is no longer mentioned (until

it begins to go), for to achieve the end one must have the means. But no one could confuse a Chauviré, a Darsonval, a Schwarz, a Jeanmaire, a Vyroubova. The style of each is so different that their names are associated with their best role. To the public Chauviré is *Giselle*, Darsonval is Sylvia, Solange Schwarz Swanilda in *Coppélia*, Jeanmaire Carmen, Vyroubova La Sylphide.

In England, except for Margot Fonteyn, the stars are only dancers technically stronger than the other members of the same company. And this is very serious. A Ballet without stars is a Ballet without life. What makes the supremacy of the star is not only her virtuosity, but her style, her gifts of expression, her radiance—in a word, that presence on the stage which gives form, movement and colour to the impalpable images which the music brings to life in mind and heart.

To my mind there are two reasons for this lack of expression in English dancers. The first is a certain modesty which is infinitely sympathetic—the French have no modesty, they relate their life histories to all the world and act out the principal episodes. If necessary, they invent. . . . The English are much more reserved. They do not show their feelings in public—they are not actors like the French. In all circumstances they maintain a certain dignity which we take for coldness or indifference. But the theatre is not life. Emotion must "get over the footlights" and be easily perceived by the public. This automatism, this discipline, which I admire in a *corps de ballet* or a troupe of dancing girls in a music-hall, are not qualities which one acclaims in a star.

The second reason which prevents English dancers from expressing their emotions is that respect for tradition which has been inculcated into them from



BEATRICE TOMPKINS  
AND HERBERT BLISS IN  
"PUNCH AND THE CHILD"  
A BALLET IN THE REPER-  
TOIRE OF THE NEW YORK  
CITY CENTER, ORIGI-  
NALLY PRODUCED FOR  
BALLET SOCIETY IN 1947,  
THIS BALLET BY FRED  
DANIELI HAS MUSIC BY  
RICHARD ARNELL, THE  
FIRST ENGLISHMAN TO  
BE ASKED TO COMPOSE  
A SCORE FOR AN  
AMERICAN BALLET. SIR  
THOMAS BEECHAM IS  
PLAYING THE MUSIC AT  
SEVERAL CONCERTS DUR-  
ING HIS AUTUMN AND  
WINTER TOUR



the earliest age. They interpret the choreography of Petipa as our actors at the Comédie-Française play the tragedies of Racine and Corneille. For simple souls a masterpiece is sacred; it must not be touched. Then, out of respect, it is interpreted in a conventional way, flat, banal, without colour or life. That is why the great classics are so often boring.

By contrast, in France nothing is respected, and this is a still worse fault. Serge Lifar takes the male variation from the third act of *Le Lac des Cygnes* and coldbloodedly places it in the *pas de deux* of *La Belle au Bois Dormant*. Diaghilev had already taken whole passages from the music of *Casse Noisette* and put them into *Aurora's Wedding*. This is rather like taking one of Hamlet's soliloquies, such as "To be or not to be" and giving it to Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Before finishing, I should like to say a word about Margot Fonteyn, because the finest Princess Aurora of the day is not an English but an international dancer. A little cold when she first appeared, she seemed to wake up when she danced *Les Demoiselles de la Nuit* in Paris for Roland Petit and gave a remarkable performance. Her seeming fragility gives an impression of immateriality as though she were a diaphanous wraith who might dance on a flower without bending the stem. And then her points of steel and her technique which, without being so strong as that of Rosella Hightower, is

in impeccable style. Margot Fonteyn has the exceptional gift of establishing continuously a harmony between dream and reality. She seems to have always in mind the dignity of her art and the traditions which assure the heavenly purity of her style. I do not care for Fonteyn in all her roles. In *Hamlet* I am scarcely convinced by this Ophelia, dark and without mystery . . . where is the sweet and gentle Ophelia of Shakespeare, plucking flowers at the edge of the stream before rejoining her sisters, the naiads, who call to her, dancing, between the reeds?

But for sheer classicism, Margot Fonteyn is surely the most complete dancer of our time. The classical dance expresses all by the absolute purity of its combination of steps. Watch Fonteyn in the *Pas d'Action* of *The Sleeping Beauty*—her style and purity are unforgettable. How easily she appears to balance! What nobility, what grandeur in *The Rose Adagio*! At each *relevé sur les pointes* time stops for a second, and that second is an eternity of grace and beauty. There, where the others dance with their legs, Fonteyn seems to dance with the very rhythm of her heart.

*Editor's Note.* Monsieur Laurent is one of the leading Paris ballet critics. His views will certainly stimulate controversy in this country.





Photograph by Lipnitzki, Paris

JEAN BABILÉE AND LESLIE CARON IN "LA RENCONTRE"

## LES BALLETS DES CHAMPS-ELYSEES IN EDINBURGH AND LONDON

LES BALLETS DES CHAMPS-ELYSEES paid an unexpected visit to London for ten performances at the Princes Theatre immediately following their three weeks in Edinburgh. Festival audiences, who expect a high standard of excellence in theatre and concert hall, were considerably disappointed, though in London the company was received with that uncritical enthusiasm which only French Ballet seems to inspire here: other companies give far better integrated performances in works which are certainly no worse and in many cases are much better, and are coolly received by comparison.

Two new ballets were shown in Edinburgh which were not included in the London programmes.

There is little to be said in favour of *Mascarade* with its theme by Boris Kochno and choreography by

Victor Gsovsky. There is no plot, the programme note describing it as "a costume ball, where the heroes and heroines of the great love tragedies are met together; Hamlet loves Juliet, Othello in his jealousy pursues Marguerite, and Don Juan is madly in love with an unknown. . . ." The only one recognisable was Hamlet though in addition to those mentioned in the argument, William Tell, Figaro, Mephisto and several other assorted types are listed. Gsovsky's choreography is profoundly uninteresting, as is also the case with his *Fête Galante*.

Lichine's *Valse Caprice* was more successful, if not particularly important. It is a purely abstract affair to music by Fauré, the soloists (Hélène Constantine, Youra Loboff and Nicolas Polajenko) were good, but the eye was sometimes distracted by a slight vagueness



## BALLET TODAY

on the part of the *corps de ballet*. This vagueness persists even when they are dancing in a ballet like *La Sylphide* which has been in the repertoire now for two years.

Janine Charrat's ballet, *La Nuit*, though founded on a typically far-fetched theme by Boris Kochno (the pursuit of the impossible!) might have been moving but somehow was not, possibly because a variety of characters are introduced and take up too much time in their capacity of red herrings. However, the idea of the man and the girl meeting in the city street at night, oblivious of the passers-by and yet never able to join hands, lent itself to an intriguing *pas de deux* in which the dancers are always separated by a gauze curtain between them. That the young man on his first entry should be carrying a child pick-a-back only confused the issue, but perhaps no-one ever did quite know what the issue was. Twenty years ago this theme was used by Massine in a Cochran revue and it seemed a good deal more impressive then and in that milieu than it does now.

This ballet, together with *L'Amour et son Amour* and *La Rencontre* were also performed in London. Of the three, Jean Babilée's first choreographic essay, *L'Amour et son Amour*, was by far the most interesting. What was particularly pleasing about it was that, although so many choreographers tend to use Babilée as a kind of super-acrobat, he is entirely classical in his own creation. He does not attempt very much with the small *corps de ballet* of zephyrs (unfortunately costumed by Jean Cocteau in fleshings with broad ribbon streamers) but he has given himself and Nathalie Philippart some enchanting movements. At the end one felt one had really been a witness to the ravishment of a mortal by a god—and this without recourse to a single suggestive movement or the usual floor writhings. A clean spring wind blew from Olympus and wafted this Psyche to the arms of her immortal lover. A serious fault for a short ballet is the over-long musical passage before the curtain rises and a dangerously long pause between the two scenes; it would perhaps be better to sacrifice the first set of a terrestrial map for the sake of swift continuity. The second set—a blueprint of the constellations of the heavens is in any case more effective. And something should be done about the costumes for the two mortals who at the moment look like something out of a Red Cross handbook on "How to Bandage."

The other Lichine ballet, *La Rencontre*, has some unusual passages and others which tend towards the ludicrous, particularly the exaggerated mouthings of Oedipus and the Sphinx as they set and expound the riddles. In the case of Oedipus, who stands well down near the footlights, the effect was as though he were engaged in a slanging match with the conductor which, in view of the general level of playing during the London season, made it a little too close to reality.



Photograph by Lido, Paris

IRÈNE SKORIK IN "MASCARADE"

Babilée and Leslie Caron perform their acrobatics on and off (and under) table and trapeze with breathtaking agility and apparent ease, though one cannot help speculating with some horror as to what would happen if either of them miscalculated a movement. The finale, with Leslie Caron as the dead Sphinx hanging head down from the trapeze and slowly swinging, was probably planned as an outstanding *coup de théâtre* but entirely fails because the whole audience is completely preoccupied in wondering how much longer she can remain there with such an excess of blood rushing to the brain. This absorption in circus trappings takes up so much of the time that Lichine is saved the trouble of working out more than a few minutes' worth of genuine choreography which was a pity, as what there was of it looked extremely good.

Of individual dancers, Youly Algaroff has improved considerably both as dancer and artist. He danced splendidly in a well-arranged solo to some music which called itself *Casse Noisette*. (There is apparently no end to the music Tchaikovsky wrote or is supposed to have written for his three ballets). Irène Skorik has not noticeably overcome the faults she revealed last season and it is a pity that so young a dancer should so completely have eschewed simplicity. Nina Vyroubova very nearly saves the now dreadfully ragged production of *La Sylphide* but she is over-tall for the very short French tutus in the classical extracts which have all been tinkered with almost beyond recognition. In the first week the best female dancing came from Hélène Constantine in the little Harlequin dance of the



otherwise fatiguing *Treize Danses* which again struck me as being a serious miscalculation in counting.

Jean Babilée continues to be the problem child of the ballet. He so obviously has it in his power to be the greatest male dancer the western world has developed during the past decade—one of the supreme dancers of the century moreover. Yet he seems utterly careless and even contemptuous of the gifts bestowed on him: he can dance like a god when he chooses—and he often prefers to behave like an ill-

tempered schoolboy. Nevertheless he has genius, and if I had to choose the one most beautiful thing in the whole of Ballet as I have seen it, I would pick his *brisés volés* in the Blue Bird *pas de deux*—that superb diagonal flight with the front leg hovering timelessly like a wing and the back leg sweeping round to beat it, and then the lovely backward arch of his body as he repeats the movement *en arrière*.

K.C. and P.W.M.

## A BALLET-GOER'S CAUSERIE (3)

By ALAN STOREY

### THE STAG AT BAY: A BACKGROUND WITH FIGURES

(Continued)

MUSIC, to Ashton, is a source of plastic equivalences rather than dramatic situations; consequently the creation of his ballets must, to some extent, be fortuitous—the outcome of mental improvisation rather than a considered idea. One imagines that primarily he is attracted by music which appeals not only to a prevailing mood but persists in recollection when the mood has altogether passed. Then, almost subconsciously perhaps, isolated fragments slowly assume amorphic forms which crystallise, on further hearings, into visual concepts—abstract idealisations, later to be broken down in experiments and reassembled into living dance patterns. And it is from these elemental patterns that the ballet moves to its completion. But whereas the equivalence in *Symphonic Variations* succeeds in leaving no trace of its initial conception, in *Nocturne* the dance of the flower-girl obtrudes from its setting, conspicuous not merely by its incongruity but more especially by its isolated approximation to the shape and nature of the Delius score. In this dance, unimpeded by extraneous dramatic action or the exigencies of theme, Ashton's sympathy and imagination is, for the first and only time, wholly engaged. The dance itself is the prototype of several now uniquely associated with Ashton's work as a choreographer; that is to say it does not exact any superficial virtuosity from its interpreter since it consists essentially of the simplest *enchaînements*. On the other hand its exploitation of poise, sustained passages terminating in sharp resolutions from pose to pose, and *naïve* tenderness of expression revealed by the singular placement and gesticulation of the hands, require an acute sensitivity to subtle rhythmic changes, uncommon muscular control to meet an equally subtle disposition of weight and stress, and an exceptional musical intelligence. For Ashton, at his most inspired, makes no attempt to match the music, to

stretch it to a preconceived purpose, or to provide, as it were, a visual commentary. Contrariwise, he regards it apparently as an ungovernable flux which shapes movements as a stream shapes its grasses—so unpredictably that they occasionally slip the current, swirling haphazardly in delightful counterpoint before returning to the prevailing flow. And it is perhaps inevitable that the mood regularly evoked by movements created in such a manner should be one of indecision, betrayed most tellingly by nervous alternations from simplicity to sophistication; nervous indeed to the point of confusion, so that intended innocence, to adapt Mr. Fry's description, may often be on at such a rakish angle that it is given quite an air of iniquity. Doubtless this is why, whenever they are alone, Ashton's young ladies revert instantly to a state of adolescence, imbued by romantic reveries in which expectancy mingles with uncertainty, joy with fear. Absurd then to accept them as the victims of despoiled love, these gentle creatures as yet ignored even by *le spectre de la rose*! The "flower-girl" weeps not for a broken heart but for its wholeness. Illusion has burst its seams at last, and the novelette, no longer readable, falls to the floor. The self-sufficiency and the desire for make-believe have faltered—she has dreamed herself out. If, at this moment, she were to turn to the assembled company and cry, like Alice: "Who cares for you? You're nothing but a pack of cards", *Nocturne* would instantly glow with a poetic validity which it lacks at present.

Unfortunately, unless one accepts the ballet as a complex essay in a Dunne-like infinite regress of dream and dreamer, Ashton's Stranger eludes hypothesis. He is the concealed word in a charade whose meaning is indefinitely withheld. Despite his apparent irrelevance to the main, he quickens its emotional atmosphere



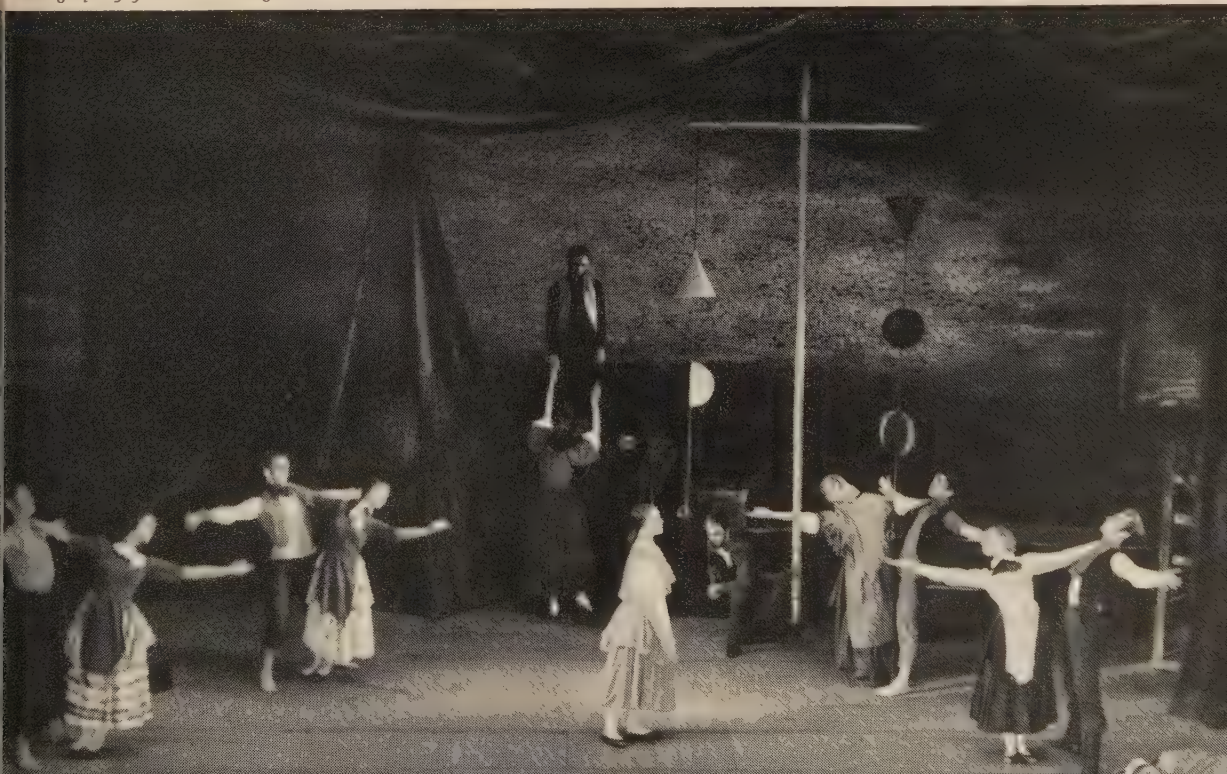
with portentous overtones; and by the very ambiguity of a presence which evokes the formal inconsequence of the Jacobean masquer, encloses the drama between unresolved marks of interrogation. Consequently the trite little theme assumes a false significance, becoming, in effect, a parable without moral or a miracle-play without miracles. And as the identity of the Stranger remains undisclosed, the spectator's ingenuity alone must decide whether he is actually a Taoist, a Christian fatalist, or merely a curious onlooker with an acutely developed sense of *laissez-faire*. That the part has for Ashton, however, a highly personal meaning which transcends its immediate context, is clearly suggested by his prolonged devotion to its interpretation. The quiet sincerity of his performance implies complete self-identification with a character whose qualities, although fundamentally opposed to his own, are, perhaps for that reason, most deeply admired and desired. With such assurance, detachment, tolerance and understanding, surely he too could face reality; accepting or rejecting its problems on his own terms; just as, in the ballet, he rejects the problem of the flower-girl. Indeed the pathos and the irony of the exposed daydream rise to a climax with the delicately poised juxtaposition of idea and reality expressed in the brief tactual relationship between the girl and the

Stranger, before he turns, with finality, from a painful manifestation of his own essential dilemma.

Ashton's preoccupation with the absolutes, latent in and dissipated by the perfunctory theme and characterisations of *Nocturne*, is stated unequivocally in *Dante Sonata* with a technical assurance and mature choreographic imagination far superior to those of the earlier work. But, unlike *Nocturne*, *Dante Sonata* has not survived the chemistry of time. It is, in fact, a museum piece; an ephemera generated in the compost of world crisis; an emotional expedient, as phantom now as the emotions it once fed. And the reason for its failure to survive lies, I believe, in the violent nature and unconvincing treatment of its symbolism—unconvincing, that is to say, not only to the spectator but also to its creator. For Ashton, as I have suggested, is no more at ease in the world of values and non-values than he is in the world outside his enchanted garden. He rather resembles an obedient child who believes and accepts the code of right and wrong behaviour formulated by its preceptors without actually comprehending the morality involved. Thus, in *Dante Sonata* the large words for good and evil obstinately refuse to be made flesh, with the result that their conflict lacks both definition and ultimate resolution. That is why, beneath the surface differences of costume, make-up and varying intensities

JOHN CRANKO'S NEW BALLET "SEA CHANGE" (DÉCOR BY JOHN PIPER) WHICH HAD ITS FIRST LONDON PERFORMANCE ON SEPTEMBER 27TH AT SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE. SHEILAH O'REILLY IS HERE SEEN (centre) WITH DAVID POOLE AND JOAN CADZOW (centre back)

Photograph by Jas. D. O'Callaghan





of movement, the Children of Darkness and the Children of Light behave similarly in their common predicament; but how much of this ambiguity is due to Ashton and how much to the limitations of choreography as a medium of expression cannot be precisely determined. As C. E. M. Joad points out: "... language was invented and developed to convey the meanings and to describe the objects appropriate to this world. It is, in fact, most successful in describing physical things which are extended in space, less successful in describing values, such as states of mind and shades of emotion and not successful at all in describing values, such as beauty or goodness, precisely because these own an other-worldly origin." In ballet the reduction of abstract symbolism to the limited range of visual imagery permitted to the human body inevitably leads to an over-simplification reminiscent of melodrama. And since goodness or evil are expressible only in terms of movement intimately associated with the emotions, their definition in physical terms removes them from the supra-rational to the commonplace. Thus the representation of Death or Fate in ballets as dissimilar in style and theme as *Swan Lake*, *Les Présages*, *Adam Zero* and *Le Jeune Homme et La Mort* is either childishly inane or perversely sentimental in the manner of a Victorian problem picture. In *Dante Sonata*, however, the symbolism is further undermined by a pervasive mood of indecision closely corresponding to that of the flower-girl in *Nocturne*. It belongs to Kafka's world rather than Dante's; a world dedicated to the claustrophobe, the nightmare victim and the neurotic. The struggle between the opposed forces of Light and Darkness, for instance, contains an element of hysteria more appropriate to the blind panic of animals caught in a trap from which there is seemingly no escape, than to an overwhelming desire for cosmic power. Despite their superficial, almost conventional antagonism, one senses that they are in some way closely allied—the polarities of a single identity, as it were, under a remote threat of destruction. This dualism is suggested throughout the action of the ballet by Ashton's use of choreographic imagery—a subject which demands closer examination.

It would be as well to remember at this point that *Dante Sonata* was created and first produced during the January of 1940, when the Sadler's Wells Company found itself faced with the frustrating uncertainties of the "phoney" war. Circumstance, therefore, played an essential part in shaping the physical nature of the ballet. For, quite apart from the choreographer's stock problem of how to cut one's coat according to one's cloth, Ashton was obliged to keep in mind the eventual call-up of experienced male dancers, and a possible decline of technical standards in the Company as a whole; the difficulties involved in the maintenance of a touring orchestra; the limitations and deficiencies

of provincial stages; and an inevitable rise of production costs. In brief, his cloth was Utility as well as in short supply. And if, for a moment, we consider what effect those early days of war must have had on a person of Ashton's temperament, the wonder grows, not that it was cut so superlatively well, but that it was cut at all. He was, after all, a dispossessed person, for even the condemned playground had proved no longer safe: strange beings had invaded it, dismantled its swings, levelled its trees, erected shelters in their places, and evacuated its one remaining occupant to alien and vaguely hostile surroundings where the *fête champêtre* had made way for the Mad Hatter's tea-party. But, chameleon-like, he survived in his new habitat, saved, almost ironically, by his acute sensitivity to aesthetic and moral change.

*To be continued.*

## International Ballet

The International Ballet tour to the end of November is as follows;—

|                      |     |                                  |
|----------------------|-----|----------------------------------|
| Week of October 24th | ... | Chiswick Empire.                 |
| „ October 31st       | ... | Wood Green Empire.               |
| „ November 7th       | ... | Grand Theatre,<br>Wolverhampton. |
| „ November 14th      | ... | New Theatre, Hull.               |
| „ November 21st      | ... | Empire, Sunderland.              |
| „ November 28th      | ... | New Theatre, Oxford.             |

Mona Inglesby who was not able to undertake the summer tour because of illness, is now back with her company.

## A NEW BALLET CLUB.

The Phoenix Ballet & Dramatic Club is Hampstead's newest cultural society. Inaugurated on July 3rd, the Club has a membership list of over fifty, and has for Patrons Miss Phyllis Bedells, Miss Molly Radcliffe and Miss Laura Wilson.

Classes are held nightly at the Club's temporary premises at 6a Abercorn Place, St. John's Wood, and range from complete Beginners to Advanced Ballet; also classes in Mime, and Tap and Musical Comedy, all of which are at very low prices.

The main emphasis of the Phoenix Club is on productions, and dancers, or aspiring dancers, are welcomed. The Club also has a varied and interesting lecture and social programme planned for the autumn and winter, details of which can be obtained from the Secretary, Mrs. Mary Paine, 18 King Henry's Road, N.W.3.





by Giacomelli, Venice

THE MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR DIAGHILEV, SERGE LIFAR AND LUDMILLA TCHERINA MAY BE SEEN BEHIND THE PRIEST

## TWENTY YEARS AFTER—VENICE PAYS HOMAGE TO SERGE DE DIAGHILEV

By FERDINAND REYNA

ON August 19th, 1929, Serge de Diaghilev died on the Lido, facing the Venice which he had loved and which had been for him his greatest inspiration.

Twenty years: much water has passed under all the bridges in the world, much forgotten also . . . but Venice has not forgotten, and commemorated the anniversary of the death of this great impresario during the Biennial Festival of 1949.

On the morning of August 19th a cortège of gondolas, draped in black and filled with flowers made their way from the Riva degli Schiavoni, opposite the Hotel Danieli, and turned towards the cemetery of San Michele where rests Diaghilev. Those who went on this journey included M. Duchemin, Minister of France, Mr. Arnold Haskell, Sir Kenneth Clark, Serge Lifar and the dancers Ludmilla Tcherina and Edmond Audran, Count Zorzi and Comm. Bazzoni representing the Biennial, Ferdinando Ballo, director of the International Festival of Music, and the French critics, Beau and Pierre Michaut.

The cemetery of San Michele is actually an old cloister open to the sea and full of birds and flowers. Wreaths and sheaves from the Royal Academy of Dancing, London, the Paris Opera, the Fenice Theatre, Venice, from Madame Tamara Karsavina, Serge Lifar, etc. were placed on the tomb of Diaghilev.

The Head of the Russian Church in Venice said the prayers. Then briefly Comm. Bazzoni recalled that figure, speaking of his first meeting with Diaghilev at the Venice Biennial of 1907 when he presented his first exhibition of Russian art, showing eighty works by thirty-two painters of his own country. It was in Venice that Diaghilev brought to maturity his dreams of art, in Venice that he died, and it is in Venice that he rests for ever in accordance with his own wish.

The same evening, at the Fenice Theatre, that incomparable piece of 18th century Venetian architecture, saw a further commemoration. The specially invited audience listened to the words of Serge Lifar speaking from the stage, whose barely repressed



emotion was poignant. Then, accompanied only by a piano, before a black curtain, Lifar, Tcherina and Audran evoked fragments of ballets; *Giselle*, *Le Lac des Cygnes*, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, *Petrouchka*. . . . The simplicity of the performance, almost ghostlike, in this superb theatre and before such an audience, was striking. It was truly a memorial worthy of Diaghilev and of Venice.

"Never has theatre or public seemed to me so imposing", said Lifar afterwards. "I have only once before in my life had such an impression of dignity and grandeur, and that was when I danced before the King and Queen of England".

Diaghilev loved Venice, and Venice is faithful to his memory.

## The Beverley Ballet Club

This club has its headquarters at 20, Orchard Rise, Richmond, Surrey and the honorary organising secretary is Miss Jeanne Gibson. On October 17th at the 20th Century Theatre, Westbourne Grove, W.11, it presented "A Night at the Ballet" with productions by the R.A.D. Production Club, Demeter Company, London Ballet Circle, Wimbledon Ballet Club, etc., this being the first time a number of important London Ballet Clubs have united for the purpose of presenting a full evening's entertainment.

Photograph by Herbert K. Paul



## D. DI SALVO

### Famous Sun-Ray Shoes



Prices:  
 Blocked Satin, Pink, White or Black 16/-  
 Unblocked " " " " " 15/-  
 Blocked Canvas, "Pink", White or Bl'k 12/6  
 Unblocked " " " " " 10/-  
 Blocked White Leather " " " 16/-  
 Unblocked " " " " " 15/-  
 Best Quality Coloured Leather in Red, Bl'k, Pink, Blue, or any other colour 16/0  
 Postage Extra 4d. per pair.

As the shape of foot varies with different dancers I have a variety of models, namely A, B, D, S, and R & L. (Right & Left Foot), to fit everyone correctly, thus ensuring the maximum degree of comfort while dancing. If desired, outline of the foot can be sent to enable me to decide on the most suitable model you require.

Write : D. Di SALVO, 11, West Street, Cambridge Circus, London, W.C.2.

Telephone : TEM. BAR 9201 and 4134.

## Balletomane's Bookshelf

ANATOMY AND BALLET. By Celia Sparger. (A. and C. Black Ltd., 12s. 6d. net).

This is a book, not for the balletgoer who has been over-catered for these many years, but for teachers and students of dancing. Miss Sparger has for years been ministering to dancers in their ailments and injuries and now has put all her wisdom into this textbook. There are photographs, X-ray photographs and diagrams which, together with the textual explanation show very clearly exactly what happens to the body when dancing. Not only that, but it also makes it plain what effect an incorrect application of technique has on the bones and muscles. The ultimate effects on the anatomy of such faults as "rolling over" and "sickling" which Miss Sparger demonstrates here, should send all dancers scampering to their mirrors. Miss Sparger obviously feels strongly that there are certain types of physique which are entirely unsuitable for dancing, and a study of her words might avoid heartbreak in some aspirants.

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET BOOKS. Edited by Arnold L. Haskell. (Published for the Governors of Sadler's Wells Foundation by The Bodley Head. 2s. 6d. each net.).

The first four of these excellent small books are as follows:—*The Sleeping Beauty*—*Hamlet* and *Miracle in the Gorbals*—*Job* and *The Rake's Progress*—*Carnaval*, *Le Spectre de la Rose* and *Les Sylphides*. Each booklet contains essays by authorities on the music, décor and general production, and as an example of the quality of the text I need only mention that for *The Sleeping Princess* Sacheverell Sitwell has written on Diaghilev's Alhambra production and that of Sadler's Wells at Covent Garden, Karsavina tells of her debut

CONSUELO CARMONA AND ANGELO ANDES IN "JOTA ARAGONESA". THEY ARE TOURING IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT DURING NOVEMBER UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE ARTS COUNCIL





Photograph by Denis Bacon

THE POTTERY FIGURES OF DANILOVA AND FRANKLIN IN "SWAN LAKE" REFERRED TO IN THE EDITORIAL

in the Maryinsky Theatre production as one of the eight attendants on the Lilac Fairy, Joy Newton writes of the way in which this ballet was reproduced for Covent Garden in 1946, and Dyneley Hussey has an essay on Tchaikovsky and his score for this ballet. The other three books are of similar interest and one's only regret is that the pictures are all very routine and that the covers are extremely ugly.

P.W.M.

## Metropolitan Ballet

At the Coliseum, Harrow, on October 20th, this company gave the first performance of a ballet specially created for them by Rosella Hightower, prima ballerina of the Marquis de Cuevas' Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo. Entitled *Pleasuredrome*, it has a score by the musical director of the company, John Lanchbery, décor and costumes by Leonard Rosoman and is based on a theme by Peter Williams about a pin table saloon.

After a three weeks' tour of Holland the company will appear at the People's Palace, Mile End Road, London, for the two weeks commencing November 21st.

## PHYLLIS BEDELLS

Vice-President, Royal Academy of Dancing

### SCHOOL OF BALLET

(Professional and Amateur)

28 QUEX ROAD

West Hampstead, London, N.W.6  
Maida Vale 2324

For

## BALLET SHOES

of finest manufacture write for price list  
and order form from the original makers

## GAMBA LTD.

46 DEAN STREET

LONDON, W.1

## BALLET GIFTS

We have increased our range of popular BALLET WALL PLAQUES, STATUETTE and DESK ORNAMENTS, etc. (prices 4/- to 12/-). Also BALLET CHRISTMAS CARDS and CALENDARS. Goods sent on approval, or send stamp for latest catalogue.

### BERNARDS

43, Hampden Avenue, Beckenham, Kent

## Enquiries re Advertising

TO :-

John W. Hawkins

50/2, UNION STREET

LONDON

S.E.1

Telephone . . . HOP 1709



FROM OCTOBER, 1949, ONWARDS  
KURT JOOSS      HANS ZULLIG  
Director              Principal Teacher

at the

# FOLKWANG SCHOOL

of

THE CITY OF ESSEN

Professional Schools of Music,  
Dance and Drama

THE SCHOOL OF  
BALLETS JOOSS

Full Professional Training for Dancers,  
Choreographers and Teachers of  
CONTEMPORARY BALLET

For all information please apply to  
THE SECRETARY,  
FOLKWANGSCHULE, ABTEI,  
ESSEN-WERDEN, GERMANY (British Zone)

To be fully informed about all  
phases of Dance . . . . READ the

## NEW YORK DANCE NEWS

CORRESPONDENTS ALL OVER  
THE WORLD

CRITIQUES, ARTICLES, PICTURES

• •

BY SUBSCRIPTION 10/- per annum

POST FREE

• •

Agent for Subscriptions :

**C. W. BEAUMONT**

75, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.2

# MUSIC - SURVEY

A QUARTERLY REVIEW

Vol. II No. 2 2/6

EDITORIAL: "SHORT AND BITTER"

Contributors include:

A PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE "DR. FAUSTUS" CONTROVERSY  
BY ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

THE MUSIC OF WILFRID MELLERS BY ARTHUR HUTCHINGS

IN MEMORIAM; RICHARD STRAUSS BY PAUL HAMBURGER

PAUL HINDEMITH—II BY ARNOLD COOKE

LESSONS FROM SALZBURG BY GEOFFREY SHARP

EDINBURGH, 1949 BY ARTHUR JACOBS

BRITTEN'S "LET'S MAKE AN OPERA" BY DONALD MITCHELL

THE FRANKFURT FESTIVAL BY HOWARD HARTOG

FILM MUSIC BY HANS KELLER

THE CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL 1949 (D.M.)

GRAMOPHONE RECORD SUPPLEMENT

MUSIC - SURVEY is obtainable through W. H. Smith & Son, Ltd. ; at leading Book and Music  
Shops ; or direct from Newman Wolsey Publishers, 244, High Holborn, London, W.C.1.  
Subscription for Four Issues : Eleven Shillings (post free).